



Report to Leader (Education and Skills portfolio)

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| Decision Date: | 20 November 2020 |
| Reference number: | ED05.20 |
| Title: | Childcare Sufficiency Assessment |
| Relevant councillor(s): | Anita Cranmer |
| Author and/or contact officer: | Sue Bayliss |
| Ward(s) affected: | Countywide |

Recommendations:

To agree the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 (CSA) for Buckinghamshire and to note:

- **The nature and the extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare within Buckinghamshire.**
- **The impact of Covid 19 on Buckinghamshire Council's role as market manager for sufficiency of early education places and childcare**

Reason for decision:

Buckinghamshire Council (BC) has a statutory duty under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, that there is sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 or up to 18 for children with a disability.

The Local Authority also has a statutory duty to report annually on how it is meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare in the area.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a measure of the need for, and supply of, childcare within the local area. Buckinghamshire Council Early Years' Service aims to work in partnership with childcare providers to influence childcare provision.

The 2020 report identifies our success over the last year in developing an additional 932 places to meet demand for the early education entitlements for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and childcare with no reports of unmet need received. In addition to assessing the childcare market in Buckinghamshire and the early education places available, the report also notes the quality of provision available in Buckinghamshire continues to be high at over 95% for all sectors.

1. Executive summary

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) summarises and analyses the local childcare market, in Buckinghamshire, however, in view of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the childcare market any findings as at the 31st March 2020 are likely to change significantly over the coming year.

Key Highlights

There has been an overall increase of 3% in the number of childcare places available in Buckinghamshire since 2019. We continue to meet parental demand for childcare and early education provision. Where parents report difficulties, support has been available through the Early Years' Brokerage Service to secure suitable childcare. Quality of provision is high with over 95% of both group and childminder provision judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Take up of the extended free entitlement (EFE) to 30 hours has levelled out. There has been a slight increase in the number of children accessing EFE, but collectively less hours are being taken. Our analysis shows that the number accessing the universal free entitlement (UFE) has decreased, however, more children are taking their full 15 hours.

The projected increase in population within Buckinghamshire remains a challenge and the, as yet unknown, impact of the Covid-19 virus on all aspects of our lives will require constant monitoring of the current availability of and demand for childcare and proactive investigations into the future sustainability of our providers.

Priorities for the current year:

- To maintain sufficiency of provision from within the existing provider base.
- To offer advice and financial planning to existing providers to adapt to the new marketplace.
- To provide advice to new providers to ensure timely completion of planned place development, which meets the needs of their community.
- To actively support new place development only where there is robust evidence of need.

- To continually monitor the availability and demand for early education places and childcare at a local level.
- To work with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on their *Out of School Childcare Pilot* for eligible Military families.
- To monitor the impact of Covid-19 on the supply of, demand for and take up of all types of childcare.

2. Content of report

3. [Buckinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020](#)

4. Other options considered

Not applicable. There is a statutory duty to report annually on the provision of sufficient childcare in the area.

5. Legal and financial implications

The Childcare Act 2006, as amended, requires Local Authorities to report annually on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient early education and childcare provision.

Sufficient childcare means securing the right type and volume of provision, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, who require places for children aged 0-14 (up to 18 for a disabled child).

The duty to secure sufficient early years provision is to enable families, who wish to, to access their entitlement to free early education of 570 hours over a minimum of 38 weeks per year for some 2 year old and all 3 and 4 year old children. The entitlement to free early education doubled to 1,140 hours for children, aged 3 and 4, of eligible working parents from September 2017.

6. Corporate implications

The supports Buckinghamshire Council to deliver on its statutory duties.

7. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

The report has been shared with Anita Cramner

8. Communication, engagement & further consultation

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 will be published on the BC website following agreement.

9. Background papers

None

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be email to Sue.Bayliss@buckinghamshire.gov.uk Sue Bayliss, Early Years Manager, Early Years Service, Children's Services **or be phone** Tel: 01296 387111

